

# What Does the Bible Teach About Christians and Alcohol Use?

Thursday Indepth Bible Class of the  
Trilacoochee church of Christ

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# Matter Over Mind

- “I have absolutely no pleasure in the stimulants in which I sometimes so madly indulge. It has not been in the pursuit of pleasure that I have periled life and reputation and reason. It has been the desperate attempt to escape from torturing memories, from a sense of insupportable loneliness, and a dread of some strange impending doom... When I could stop, I didn't want to, and now that I want to stop, I cannot.”  
*(Edgar Allan Poe)*
- On October 3, 1849, Poe was found on the streets of Baltimore delirious from the long term effects of alcoholism. He never recovered coherency, and died four days later in agony at Washington College Hospital, crying out “Lord, help my poor soul!”

# The Impact Of Alcohol Use

- Out of every eight persons who take their first drink of alcohol, one of them will become a lifelong alcoholic.
- The World Health Organization has estimated that as of 2016, there were 380 million people with alcoholism worldwide (5.1% of the population over 15 years of age).
- As of 2015 in the United States, about 17 million (7%) of adults and 700,000 (2.8%) of those age 12 to 17 years of age are alcoholics.
- Alcoholism directly resulted in 139,000 deaths in the US in 2013, up from 112,000 deaths in 1990.
- A total of 3.3 million deaths yearly worldwide (5.9% of all deaths) are believed to be due to alcohol.
- Alcoholism reduces a person's life expectancy by about ten years.

# The Impact Of Alcohol Use

- Physical impact
  - Excessive alcohol use can damage all organ systems, but it particularly affects the brain, heart, liver, pancreas and immune system.
  - Alcoholism can result in mental illness, delirium tremens, Wernicke-Korsakoff syndrome, irregular heartbeat, an impaired immune response, liver cirrhosis, and increased cancer risk.
  - Drinking during pregnancy can result in fetal alcohol spectrum disorders.
  - Prolonged, severe alcohol misuse frequently leads to cognitive impairment and early dementia.

# The Impact Of Alcohol Use

- Social and familial impact
  - Alcohol misuse is associated with an increased risk of committing criminal offences, including child abuse, domestic violence, rape, burglary and assault.
  - Alcoholism is often associated with loss of employment, which can lead to financial problems or legal consequences, such as criminal charges for drunk driving or public disorder, or penalties for actionable behavior.
  - An alcoholic's behavior and mental impairment while drunk can profoundly affect those surrounding him and lead to isolation from family and friends. This can lead to marital conflict and divorce, or contribute to domestic violence and child neglect or abuse.
  - In 2010, alcohol misuse cost the United States 249 billion dollars.
  - Alcohol is responsible for more than half of all visits to hospital emergency rooms.
  - In 2016, 10,497 people died in alcohol-impaired driving crashes, accounting for 28% of all traffic-related deaths in the United States. 21 people die each day in drunk driver-related accidents, averaging one person every 50 minutes.

# The Impact Of Alcohol Use

- Now, these are the big scary facts about alcoholism.
- However, I'm certain every alcoholic started out saying to himself, "I can handle it; it's just a little social drinking."
- Likewise, Christians often say to themselves, "Since I have no intention of becoming one of those alcoholic statistics, I can do a little social drinking and not be guilty of sin."
- Can Christians drink socially? Can they have a few beers on the weekend, or have a cocktail after work to relax, or a glass of wine to take the edge off of the stress of the day?

# Matter Over Mind

- Thought - Sin always begins with a thought
  - James 1:13-15 - “Let no one say when he is tempted, I am tempted by God; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. 14 But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. 15 Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.”

# Matter Over Mind

- Consideration - Contemplating sin in the mind
  - Psalm 4:4 - “Be angry, and do not sin. Meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still.”
  - Mark 7:18-23 - “So He said to them, Are you thus without understanding also? Do you not perceive that whatever enters a man from outside cannot defile him, 19 because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated, thus purifying all foods? 20 And He said, What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. 21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, 22 thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. 23 All these evil things come from within and defile a man.”



# Matter Over Mind

- Attitude - Form or adjust a belief about the sin; begin to rationalize
  - Prov. 4:23 - “Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life.”
  - Prov. 14:9 - “Fools mock at sin, But among the upright there is favor.”
  - 1Kings 16:31 - “And it came to pass, as though it had been a trivial thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took as wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians; and he went and served Baal and worshiped him.”

# Matter Over Mind

- Action - Gives himself enough rationale to entertain the desires of the flesh, so that he performs the sin he pondered
  - Psalm 7:14 - “Behold, the wicked brings forth iniquity; Yes, he conceives trouble and brings forth falsehood.”
  - Prov. 29:6 - “By transgression an evil man is snared...”

# Matter Over Mind

- Habit - At this stage the person has committed it a number of times, and gives it an ongoing place in his life
  - John 8:34 - “Jesus answered them, Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.”
  - 2Peter 2:18-19 - “For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error. 19 While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage.”

# Matter Over Mind

- Addiction - At this point the person has become addicted; and, because of inertia and the power of sin, he becomes reprobate; he will be unable to remove it from his life
  - Reprobate - “a mind void of judgment or an unapproving mind” (Strong's)

# Matter Over Mind

- Heb. 3:13 - “but exhort one another daily, while it is called Today, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.”
- Rom. 1:28 - “And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting”
- 2Tim. 3:8 - “Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith.”
- Titus 1:16 - “They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.”

# Matter Over Mind

- At this point it is too late
  - Heb. 6:4-6 - “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6 if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.”

# Matter Over Mind

- At this point it is too late
  - Heb. 10:26-27 - “For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, 27 but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries.”
  - Rom. 7:22-25 - “For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. 23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. 24 O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? 25 I thank God--through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

# Mind Over Matter

- Realize that giving in to addiction is sin and not a psychological deficiency or disease.
- Humankind minimizes sin with familiarity, amusement, TV pop psychology, euphemisms, and ersatz comparisons
  - Prov. 14:9 - “Fools mock at sin...”
  - Prov. 10:23 - “To do evil is like sport to a fool”



# Mind Over Matter

- Take responsibility for actions
  - Gen. 3:11-13 - “And He said, Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat? 12 Then the man said, The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate. 13 And the LORD God said to the woman, What is this you have done? The woman said, The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”
  - Matt. 27:24 - “When Pilate saw that he could not prevail at all, but rather that a tumult was rising, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. You see to it.”

# Mind Over Matter

- Luke 19:8 - “Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold.”
- 1Tim. 1:12-15 - “And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, 13 although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. 14 And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. 15 This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.”

# Mind Over Matter

- Realize one cannot do it alone, and then seek out God's help
  - 2Cor. 10:3-5 - “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. 4 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, 5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ”
  - Phil 4:13 - “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

# Mind Over Matter

- Destroy everything associated with the sin, including risky associations
  - Eph. 4:22 - “That you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts...”
  - Mark 9:43, 45, 47 - “If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched... 45 And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame, rather than having two feet, to be cast into hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched...47 And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire”

# Mind Over Matter

- Begin rebuilding and reclaiming the mind
  - Eph. 4:23 - “...And be renewed in the spirit of your mind”
  - Rom. 12:1-2 - “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”
  - Rom. 13:13-14 - “Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.”

# Mind Over Matter

- Get busy in God's work
  - Eph. 4:24 - “...And that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.”
  - Eph. 2:10 - “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”

# Mind Over Matter

- Rest in the promises of God
  - Heb. 13:5 - “...For He Himself has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you.”
  - Matt. 28:20 - “...And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”
  - 1Peter 5:10 - “But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.”
  - 2Tim. 4:8 - “Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.”

# Why Christians Do Not Use Alcohol

- Alcohol impairs judgment at every level of use
  - Kings and rulers are instructed to abstain - Prov. 31:4-5
  - It is reserved for the dying and destroyed - Prov. 31:6-7
  - Alcohol is not for those who would be wise or responsible



# Why Christians Do Not Use Alcohol

- We are commanded to be temperate
  - Gal 5:22-23; 1Cor. 6:10-13; 2Peter 1:5-8
  - Temperance - egkrateuomai - “to exercise self-restraint or self-control in diet and chastity; contain, be temperate; generic in form and application” (Strong's)

# Why Christians Do Not Use Alcohol

- Social drinking is not compatible with our profession in Christ
  - We are to dedicate ourselves to doing the will of God, not the parties of men - 1Peter 4:1-2
  - We abstain from partying regardless of what others think of the abstention; in fact, because of it - 1Peter 4:3-4

# Why Christians Do Not Use Alcohol

- We abstain because others need us to
  - Concern for the weaknesses of others - Rom. 14:14-15
  - Concern for righteousness, peace, and joy in the Spirit - Rom. 14:16-18
  - Concern for the spiritual safety of others - Rom. 14:19-20
  - We must love them more than any presumed right to drink - Rom. 14:21

# Why Christians Do Not Use Alcohol

- Evidently Timothy had chosen to forego wine for this reason; Paul prescribed that Timothy drink wine for medicinal purposes - 1Tim. 5:23
- To take Paul medical prescription for Timothy's physical ailment and use it to justify drinking alcohol in social settings is the same thing as taking someone's prescription for painkillers and using them recreationally.

# Why Christians Do Not Use Alcohol

- We abstain because God made us stewards of our influence - Rom. 14:13-21
- Should Christians recreationally engage in an activity (social drinking) that contributes to:
  - The number one drug problem in our country? (1 in 13 Americans have a problem with alcoholism)
  - The senseless killing of 11,000 victims a year? (half of all driving related accidents involve driving under the influence of alcohol)
  - An estimated 25% of divorces? (which God hates - Mal 2:16)

# Why Christians Do Not Use Alcohol

- The responsibility of the Christian regarding influence is clear
  - Rom. 14:21; 1Cor. 10:31-33
  - Only the insensitive and selfish Christian would try to justify engaging in social drinking today
  - The mature Christian considers whether the practice glorifies God and benefits his fellow human beings

# Why Christians Do Not Use Alcohol

- It is sin - Gal. 5:19-21 - "And the like"
  - His list is not to be taken as all inclusive
  - We must apply discernment
  - Many people want a "Thou shall not..." for anything to be wrong
  - Instead, we are given basic principles of conduct, with some specific examples to illustrate such principles - Heb. 5:12-14

# Why Christians Do Not Use Alcohol

- How can we know when something not specifically addressed is sin?
  - “And The Like”
  - Gal. 5:19-25 - “Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, 21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. 24 And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.”
- Is the activity like the works of the flesh?
- Or is it like the fruit of the Spirit?



# What Does the Bible Teach About Christians and Alcohol Use?

- “I’m tired of hearing sin called sickness and alcoholism a disease. It is the only disease I know of that we’re spending hundreds of millions of dollars a year to spread. All sins tend to be addictive, and the terminal point of addiction is damnation.” (W. H. Auden)
- 1Cor. 6:19-20 - “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? 20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.”
- 1Peter 5:8 - “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”